

SCIENTIFIC CERTIFICATION SYSTEMS' ENVIRONMENTAL CLAIMS CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

Introduction

Scientific Certification Systems's (SCS) Environmental Claims Certification Program was developed in 1990 to independently verify the "accuracy of environmental claims on products." Under this program, SCS conducts detailed investigations to determine whether a claim can be verified. When the program was developed, environmental claims were largely unregulated and it was difficult for consumers and retailers to know what claims to believe. SCS certifies claims in the following areas:

- Recycled Fiber
- Biodegradable Product
- Certified Organic Ingredients
- No Smog Producing Ingredients (VOCs)
- Water Efficiency

Once a product has been certified by SCS, its packaging may display an "authorized certification emblem" accompanied by an exact description of the verified claim. SCS emphasizes consumer education by providing product shelf signs, information printed on the products, and special educational material prepared by manufacturers and retailers. SCS will certify claims for consumer products and packaging, as well as for materials used by product manufacturers. To date, more than 150 manufacturers and retailers are participating in the SCS Environmental Claims Certification Program, and SCS has evaluated claims for more than 2,000 consumer and business products. Participants range from small entrepreneurs to Fortune 500 companies. The vast majority of companies are based in the US

Recent Developments

SCS recently integrated its Environmental Claims Certification Program and its LCA and Certified Eco-Profile programs. This allows SCS to help companies choose from several environmental claims to find the best certification for a particular product. A company may choose a full life-cycle assessment, but also may choose to have a specific claim certified.

Program Summary

Five steps are taken during claims certification. In Step 1, SCS does an initial feasibility assessment of the manufacturer's product to determine the appropriate certification in one of the five certification categories. The manufacturer and SCS sign a contract in Step 2. In Step 3, SCS engineers or scientists verify the manufacturer's claim by evaluating information released by the manufacturer, reviewing results from independent testing facilities, and performing on-site

inspections to verify the information. In Step 4, if a product's claims are substantiated, SCS issues a certificate and authorizes the use of the SCS Certification Emblem to the manufacturer. Ongoing monitoring takes place in Step 5, during which quarterly reviews are conducted to maintain the accuracy of data. Fees for certification vary greatly, ranging from \$1,500-8,000. Among other factors, fees depend on the number of sites that have to be visited, the complexity of the production process, and the ease of obtaining information from the company being studied. SCS charges companies for quarterly certification updates, but does not charge an annual fee or royalty.

In addition to verification, SCS administers special claims screening programs for retailers and other purchasing agents. These programs help purchasing agents to ensure that product environmental claims that manufacturers may be using are credible and comply with all state and federal green marketing guidelines.

Program Methodology

The categories for claim certification were chosen based on the types of environmental claims that prevailed in the market. Criteria were developed with information gathered from stakeholders, outside literature, independent studies, and SCS's scientific advisory board. The criteria were reviewed by industry and stakeholders. Criteria are readily available on Fact Sheets provided by SCS.

Other Information

In 1991, SCS announced joint efforts to establish an Environmental Claims Evaluation Program for The Home Depot, a nationwide retailer. Under this program, SCS is working with The Home Depot to verify the accuracy and significance of claims made for products that it stocks. In addition to the Environmental Claims Evaluation Program, many of The Home Depot stores carry products that have undergone actual certification.

References

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Product Categories

Final Categories

- Recycled Fiber
- Biodegradable Product
- Certified Organic Inputs
- No Smog Producing Ingredients (VOCs)
- Water Efficiency

Categories Under Development

- Alternatives to Poison
- Poison-free

